

REVIEW

OF THE

LIFE, CHARACTER AND POLITICAL OPINIONS

OF

ZACHARY TAYLOR.



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REVIEW.

THE position which Zachary Taylor now occupies before the country as a candidate for the Chief Magistracy of the Republic, excites a very natural curiosity on all hands, with respect to his life, character, and opinions.

This interest which we find everywhere manifested for Gen. Taylor, exists independently of his Presidential nomination, and has even a more solid foundation than any civil distinction which he may have received. It rests upon those higher qualities of personal character, which in all ranks of life, and all ages of the world, have conferred dignity upon the man, the warrior, and the statesman,—indomitable courage, moderation, and humanity.

The life of no public man of our own day, in any military or civil station, can show so many instances of the exercise of these rare virtues as that of Gen. Taylor.—Reared amidst the perils and privations of a frontier settlement, and necessitated, through the whole period of his early life, to the performance of labors and hardships, incident to his situation, of no ordinary severity, his simple habits, unaffected and modest virtues, his courage and patience, are but a natural and legitimate consequence.

It is not the design of these pages to go into any extended narrative of the events of Gen. Taylor's life. Most authentic and reliable histories of his career, have already been laid before the public. A deep conviction of his extraordinary merit has long since found a place in the popular mind and heart; and the energies of all good men are now directed towards the best means of placing him in that high position to which he seems to have been providentially called.

Gen. Taylor is of English ancestry, and was born in Virginia on the 24th of December, 1790, and is now, therefore, in his 59th year. As far as we are informed, his early advantages of education were limited, and only such as the varying fortunes of his family, and the ordinary teachings of the school master of that day, in the backwoods, could confer. On the 3d of May, 1808, he received from President Jefferson, a commission as First Lieutenant of the Seventh Regiment of United States Infantry, and in 1812, as a reward for his activity and faithfulness, a commission as Captain was conferred upon him by President Madison, with an assignment as Commander of Fort Harrison. Here it was that young Taylor displayed that presence of mind, capacity and resource, which have since so remarkably distinguished him.

The defence of Fort Harrison, in view of all the circumstances under which it was made, reflects the highest credit upon the youthful soldier, and if no other success had attended his military career, would have justly entitled him to a prominent place in the annals of his country. From this period down to the Black Hawk war, in 1832, Gen. Taylor was employed in the ordinary routine of garrison duty. For his gallantry at Fort Harrison, he received the brevet rank of Major, and subsequently, in 1819, a commission as Lieut. Colonel. In 1832 he led a regiment in the battle of the "Bad Axe." From 1836 to 1840 he was engaged in the Seminole war in Florida, and through the whole of this long period of almost uninterrupted service evinced a wonderful exactness in the discharge of his duties—a watchful guardianship of the interests intrusted to his care—and a most heroic patience and fortitude in every situation to which he had been assigned.

With a character thus formed, Gen. Taylor entered upon an eventful era in the history of his country. An era which, however much it may have been overshadowed by a policy adopted and pursued by the administration, — a policy of war, and invasive war, hitherto unknown in the working of our political system — has been rendered brilliant by the successes of our arms, the promise and visible presence of a man, in whose hands the olive branch shall hereafter be even more potent than the sword. Gen. Taylor, obedient to the call of his country, notwithstanding that his own private opinions with reference to the war accorded with those of the Whig party of the country, in opposition to its manifest designs and objects, assumed its responsibilities. For the purpose of showing his exact position with reference to the war, and the important questions involved in it, we propose to glance cursorily at his correspondence with the Government, the succession of events in Mexico, and, more at large, at his recent letters, which (in addition to his well known and established reputation) fix upon his political character the indelible Whig stamp.

During the negotiations for the admission of Texas into the Union, the determination of the Mexican Government to resist the consummation of this measure, as evinced by the action of its Congress, in threatening to invade the country,—made it necessary for the United States Government to place a military force on the Mexican frontier, in order to repel any attack which might be made upon Texas. This the Government, under the circumstances of the case, felt bound to do, inasmuch as the proposition for annexation had passed Congress, and only awaited the acceptance of the Governor and people of Texas to become law.

In view of the urgency of the case, the President ordered Gen. Taylor with a portion of the army to advance into Texas, and to occupy a position at Corpus Christi. The date of this occupation was August 8, 1845. Corpus Christi is situated at the mouth of the river Nueces, the ancient boundary of the department of Texas, on its western border, and was believed to be the outermost limits to which the jurisdiction of the new Republic of Texas had ever extended; although it is known that Texas had asserted her claim to the whole territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, without, however, being able to maintain, or extend her laws over it. The territory between these two rivers had formed originally the departments of Tamaulipas and Coahuila, comprising, according to the best authorities, settlements for 500 miles in the lower, and 500 in the upper portion, extending across 12 degrees of latitude.

After remaining six months at Corpus Christi, during which time Gen. Taylor was constantly and actively employed in drilling his troops, a disposition became manifest on the part of the Government, that Gen. Taylor should make a movement towards the Rio Grande. Notwithstanding the rumors of gathering armies on the Mexican side, no hostile demonstrations had as yet been made. The administration were growing impatient. Intimations had already been thrown out to the General that the banks of the Rio Grande were his "ultimate destination." But as yet, the old man, full of that noble sentiment, "*I look upon war at all times, and under all circumstances, as a national calamity, to be avoided if compatible with national honor*;" unwilling to take any step which should provoke hostilities, and himself satisfied of the impolicy and injustice of assuming an offensive attitude towards the Mexican nation, declined to move an inch beyond the position originally taken, without the peremptory orders of the Government.

Nothing can be more conclusive of the pacific character and disposition of Gen. Taylor, and nothing places him higher upon Whig ground, than his official correspondence at Corpus Christi.

It was evidently the design and determination of the Administration, that he should embroil himself with the Mexican forces, and that a war which had been undertaken as a "defence from foreign invasion" should be changed into one of invasion and conquest.

"In case of war, (wrote Mr. Secretary Marey on the 30th Aug. 1815) either declared or made manifest by hostile acts, your main object will be the protection of Texas, but the pursuit of this object will not necessarily confine your action within the Territory of Texas." Not so thought Gen. Taylor. In his reply to the letter of the Secretary of War, of Oct. 16, he said, "The position now occupied by the troops, may perhaps be the best while negotiations are pending, or, at any rate, until a disposition shall be manifested by Mexico to protract them unreasonably. Under the supposition that such may be the view of the Department, I shall make no movement from this point, except for the purpose of examining the country, until further instructions are received." On the 13th January, Gen. Taylor received definite instructions from the War Department, to break up his camp at Corpus Christi, and move forward towards the Rio Grande; this was accomplished on the 11th March.

The whole force then under his command did not exceed 4,000 men, and consisted of a part of the 2d dragoons under Col. Twiggs, detachments from the four regiments of artillery, formed into a battalion under Col. Childs, and also detachments from the 3d, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th regiments of infantry, with Duncan's and Ringgold's batteries of light artillery, and a small number of engineer and ordnance officers. On account of the scarcity of provisions in his camp, and the desert character of the route along which he was to pass, making it difficult to find sufficient water and forage, the army was separated into detachments, with an interval of days between some of them, and thus proceeded, on the sea shore for the most part, across a country covered with morasses, and chapparal.—in all respects the worst for the operations of an army, that could be imagined.

The distance between Corpus Christi, and the Rio Grande, is 780 miles. Small parties of Mexican cavalry were occasionally met, as they approached the Arroyo Colorado, a fordable river, where it was expected the passage of the army would be resisted. The river was crossed in the most admirable order, under cover of a battery placed upon the bank, in a position to protect the crossing, the troops evincing the greatest alacrity and precision of movement. A Mexican corps of observation appeared upon the opposite bank, but made no show of resistance. In this manner the march was accomplished, and Gen. Taylor arrived at Point Isabel, without accident and in good order. Leaving at this place, which had been set on fire on its evacuation by the Mexicans, a sufficient garrison, and a part of his train and stores, Gen. Taylor set out for Matamoras, following up the Rio Grande on its left bank until he had arrived at a point opposite, and overlooking the town. As yet no act of open hostility had proceeded from either of the parties, (unless it is conceded that the occupation of the Rio Grande by the troops of the United States, was an occupation of Mexican territory, and then, by the law of nations, it was an act of war on the part of the United States.) Otherwise Gen. Taylor had advanced to this position upon the river without conflict, and without any opposition, more than the protest of the provincial authorities of Tamaulipas.

Gen. Taylor with great activity proceeded to protect his position, and from its elevated and commanding situation he was enabled to bring his "guns to bear," (to use his own words) directly upon the public square of Matamoras, and within good range for demolishing the town. Matamoras was then occupied by the Mexican Gen. Arista, who had succeeded Gen. Ampudia in the chief command, with about 3,000 troops, deriving their provision from the sea. Gen. Taylor ordered a blockade of the river, and thereby cut off any further supplies from that quarter. As yet no overt act had been committed on either side. It should be stated, however, that Col. Cross and Lieut. Porter had been killed, as was supposed, by parties of rancheros; at any rate without the recognition or authority of the Mexican General.

Apprehending a design on the part of Arista, to cross the river, and place

himself between Fort Brown and Point Isabel, where the great bulk of the army supplies had been left, Capt. Thornton was sent out with a detachment of 50 or 60 men on the 24th of April to reconnoitre, and coming suddenly upon a body of Mexicans, attacked them without estimating their numbers, or selecting a favorable point of attack, and was overpowered, and his men either killed or taken prisoners. This engagement, although comparatively trifling and unimportant in itself, involved the great issue of war.

It was considered by Gen. Taylor, that war had commenced, that the disposition of Mexico could not be mistaken, and with this conviction he immediately made his first requisition for volunteers upon the Governors of Texas and Louisiana. On the 3d May, Gen. Taylor, with the greater part of his force, left Fort Brown for Point Isabel, for the purpose of bringing up his supplies from that place. He reached the Fort without meeting with any obstruction, and set out on his return on the 7th May, and had advanced about 12 miles, when he learned that a considerable Mexican force had crossed the river, and now lay directly before him. On the next day, the 8th of May, at about 2 o'clock, the battle of Palo Alto commenced, and continuing from five to six hours, during which time the American troops, officers and men, under every variety of circumstance, and considerable disadvantage, fought with great gallantry and resolution,—resulted in the most decided success. The numbers engaged were, on the Mexican side, 6000, and on the American side about 2200. The Mexican forces had received a tremendous check; but being re-inforced from Matamoras, they still lay in front of the American Camp, determined to dispute its further progress.

The morning of the 9th dawned upon the wearied soldiers; but nothing daunted by the preponderating force again arrayed against them, they renewed the attack, and had the satisfaction, not long delayed to them, of seeing the entire rout of the Mexican army, in the battle of Resaca de la Palma; the remnant of which, crossing the Rio Grande in great haste and terror, shut themselves up in Matamoras.

The town, after having suffered a heavy cannonading, on the failure of Arista to come to an agreement with Gen. Taylor, by which he should continue to hold it, was evacuated by him, and occupied by Gen. Taylor on the morning of the 18th. Down to this point, the war had been carried on by regular troops. From this time, new ideas began to be entertained by the Government in regard to its management, and new plans began to develop themselves; a war which had been commenced for a purpose of defence and security, against the anticipated attack of an invading force, was now assuming an offensive and vindictive character. The Government had become excited, and the country alarmed.

The call for large levies of volunteers had been responded to with the greatest degree of enthusiasm in the South, among the States upon whom the requisitions had been levied; and everywhere throughout the Union, in the first moments of elation produced by the brilliant successes of the 8th and 9th of May, the complete rout of the Mexican forces, and the occupation by the American General of the City of Matamoras, no ordinary amount of sympathy and interest was attracted towards every movement of the army.

A force of twenty thousand men was soon drawn together under the lead of Gen. Taylor. The various towns on the river were successively taken, and garrisoned, and ultimately the city of Monterey, an important and strongly fortified place, was assaulted with considerable loss of life on the American side, but with great skill and bravery, and by terms of capitulation yielded up to our arms, and immediately occupied.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that the great success of Gen. Taylor at Monterey, should have excited throughout the whole country a feeling of pride and exultation. He had beleaguered a fortified city containing a population of

fifteen thousand, and a garrison of 10,000 soldiers, and with his 6000 men, a mere handful, and made up in part of volunteers, many of whom had never participated in any regular engagement, had fought gallantly, and reduced it to terms of capitulation. It is not surprising, in view of the just reputation gained by Gen. Taylor, by this successful action, that the administration itself should have trembled for its own security. And we find that, however much the people themselves may have appreciated the gallantry and success of Gen. Taylor, the unscrupulous adherents of the administration in Congress were prepared to nullify a vote of thanks to the deliverer of the army of the Rio Grande, and to the victor of Monterey, by a proviso censuring the capitulation granted to that city. This attempt recoiled upon its authors. Gen. Taylor was known to the administration to be a Whig, and on this account obnoxious to men who had nothing to expect from him, and hated by those in power, as a rival, with whom they might one day have to cope. The humanity displayed in the terms of capitulation granted to the city of Monterey, redounded more to the glory of Gen. Taylor, than all the brilliant successes which had thus far distinguished the campaign.

The determination of the administration to break down the popularity of Gen. Taylor showed itself openly, and in the most dishonorable and insulting manner. Every body remembers the action of the democratic members of Congress upon the resolution of thanks. These resolutions were introduced into the House, by Mr. Cocke of Tennessee, on the 30th January, 1847, and were substantially to this effect: "That the thanks of Congress are due and are hereby presented to Major General Zachary Taylor, and through him to the brave officers and soldiers, both of the regular army, and of the volunteers under his command, for their courage, skill, fortitude and good conduct in storming the city of Monterey, defended as it was by a force more than double their numbers, and protected by the strongest fortifications, which resulted in a most brilliant victory to our army and reflected imperishable honor upon our arms." After a suspension of the rules to admit the Resolutions, against which, Bowlin, Dromgoole, Hamlin, and Charles J. Ingersoll voted; Jacob Thompson offered the following amendment: "Provided, That nothing herein contained shall be construed into an approbation of the terms of the capitulation of Monterey." The vote on the amendment was taken by yeas and nays, and was carried, 110 in the affirmative and 70 in the negative. The administration members voted in a body for the resolution of censure. On the subject of this resolution, Mr. Ashmun said in his place, that it was "part and parcel of a course of proceedings commenced by the Department and its friends, in that House, against Gen. Taylor. The policy seemed to be to suppress all discussion; to get a partial, one-sided statement of facts. In this way Gen. Taylor was to be put down." The action of the friends of the administration in the Senate was of the same character. On a motion of Mr. Speight to strike out the Proviso, in the House resolutions, the yeas and nays were taken, and resulted in its rejection. Every whig in the Senate voted in the affirmative with a few democrats, 33 in all, and 15 in the negative; among whom were *Gen. Cass*, Dix, Hannegan, Niles, and Sevier.

In addition to this attempted censure of the conduct of Gen. Taylor, in the capitulation of Monterey, Mr. Marey in his letter of Oct. 13, thus writes:

The government is fully persuaded that if you had been aware of the special reasons disclosed in the despatch of the 22d ultimo, and the intentions of the government still entertained, you would not have acceded to the suspension of hostilities for even the limited period specified in the articles of capitulation; but as its continuance depends upon the orders of your government, you are instructed to give the requisite notice that the armistice is to cease at once, and that each party is at liberty to resume and prosecute hostilities without restriction.

In reply to this communication of the War Department, Gen. Taylor writes,

under date of November 8, 1846, in defence of the capitulation, as follows: No one can read this letter without applauding the wisdom, moderation and humanity, which breathe through the whole of it. After specifying the points embraced in the convention, he says:

Although the main communication with the interior was in our possession, yet one route was open to the Mexicans throughout the operations, and could not be closed, as were also other minor tracks and passes through the mountains. Had we, therefore, insisted on more rigorous terms than those granted, the result would have been the escape of the body of the Mexican force, with the destruction of its artillery and magazines; our only advantage being the capture of a few prisoners of war, at the expense of valuable lives and much damage to the city. *The consideration of humanity was present to my mind during the conference which led to the convention, and outweighed in my judgment the doubtful advantages to be gained by a resumption of the attack upon the town.* This conclusion has been fully confirmed by an inspection of the enemy's position and means since the surrender. It was discovered that his principal magazine, containing an immense amount of powder, was in the cathedral, completely exposed to our shells from two directions. The explosion of this mass of powder, which must have ultimately resulted from a continuance of the bombardment, would have been infinitely disastrous, involving the destruction not only of the Mexican troops, but of non-combatants, and even our own people, had we pressed the attack.

It has been my purpose in this communication not so much to defend the convention from the censure which I deeply regret to find implied in the Secretary's letter, as to show that it was not adopted without cogent reasons, most of which occur of themselves to the minds of all who are acquainted with the condition of things here. To that end I beg that it may be laid before the general-in-chief and the Secretary of War.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR.

On the day after the date of this letter, Gen. Taylor wrote confidentially to Gen. Gaines. He refers to the conduct of the Government in reference to the capitulation, and distinctly announces his private feelings and opinions on the subject of the war generally. The letter is a long one. We select only such parts as have a bearing upon the present discussion:—

I do not believe that the authorities at Washington are at all satisfied with my conduct in regard to the terms of the capitulation entered into with the Mexican commander, which you no doubt have seen, as they have been made public through the official organ, and copied into various other newspapers. I have this moment received an answer (to my despatch announcing the surrender of Monterey, and the circumstances attending the same,) from the Secretary of War, stating that "it was regretted by the President that it was not deemed advisable to insist on the terms I had proposed in my first communication to the Mexican commander, in regard to giving up the city," adding that "the circumstances which dictated, no doubt justified the change."

Although the terms of capitulation may be considered too liberal on our part by the President and his advisers, as well as by many others at a distance, particularly by those who do not understand the position which we occupied, (otherwise they might come to a different conclusion in regard to the matter,) yet on due reflection I see nothing to induce me to regret the course I pursued. The proposition on the part of Gen. Ampudia, which had much to do in determining my course in the matter, was based on the ground that our government had proposed to him to settle the existing difficulties by negotiations, (which I knew was the case, without knowing the result,) which was then under consideration by the proper authorities, and which he, (Gen. Ampudia,) had no doubt would result favorably, as the whole of his people were in favor of peace. If so, I considered the further effusion of blood not only unnecessary, but improper.

Their force was also considerably larger than ours, and from the size and position of the place, we could not completely invest it; so that the greater portion of their troops, if not the whole, had they been disposed to do so, could, any night, have abandoned the city, at once entered the mountain passes, and effected their retreat, do what we could. *Had we been put to the alternative of taking the place by storm, (which there is no doubt we should have succeeded in doing,) we should, in all probability, have lost fifty or one hundred men killed, besides the wounded, which I wished to avoid, as there appeared to be a prospect of peace, even if a distant one.* I also wished to avoid the destruction of women and children, which must have been very great, had the storming process been resorted to. Besides, they had a very large and strong fortification a short distance from the city, which, if carried

with the bayonet, must have been taken at great sacrifice of life; and, with our limited train of heavy or battering artillery, it would have required twenty or twenty-five days to take it by regular approaches.

If we are, (in the language of Mr. Polk and General Scott,) under the necessity of "conquering a peace," and that by taking the capitol of the country,—we must go to Vera Cruz, take that place, and then march on the city of Mexico. To do so in any other direction I consider out of the question. But admitting that we conquer a peace by doing so,—say at the end of the next twelve months—*will the amount of blood and treasure which must be expended in doing so, be compensated by the same?* I think not,—especially if the country we subdue is to be given up; and I imagine there are but few individuals in our country who think of annexing Mexico to the United States."

This letter, it is manifest from its confidential character, was never intended for publication, but it found its way into the newspapers, and afforded a timely apology to the administration for further persecutions. Only two days after the date of its publication, Mr. Marcy says:

The disclosure of your views as to the future operations of our forces, accompanied as it is, with your opinion that the fruits of the war, if completely successful, will be of little worth to us, will, it is greatly to be feared, not only embarrass our subsequent movements, but disincline the enemy to enter into negotiations for peace. With particular reference to these effects, the publication is most deeply to be regretted.

The 650th paragraph of the General Regulations for the army, published March 1, 1825, declares that "Private letters or reports, relative to military marches and operations, are frequently *mischievous* in design, and always *disgraceful* to the army. They are, therefore, strictly forbidden; and any officer found guilty of making such report for publication, without special permission, or of placing the writing beyond his control, so that it finds its way to the press, within one month after the termination of the campaign to which it relates, shall be dismissed from the service."

To this grossly insulting despatch (in which an obsolete and ridiculous army regulation is revived, and the terms "mischievous" and "disgraceful" used to apply to the Gaines letter,) Gen. Taylor wrote the famous *Æsop* letter, which we do not hesitate to copy entire.

HEAD-QUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Aguila Nueva, March 3, 1847.

SIR:—I have had the honor to receive your communication of January 27, enclosing a newspaper slip, and expressing the regret of the Department that the letter copied in that slip, and which was addressed by myself to Major General Gaines, should have been published.

Although your letter does not convey the direct censure of the Department or the President, yet, when it is taken in connexion with the revival of a paragraph in the regulations of 1825, touching the publication of private letters concerning operations in the field, I am not permitted to doubt that I have become the subject of executive disapprobation. To any expression of it, coming with the authority of the President, I am bound by my duty, and by my respect for his high office, patiently to submit; but, lest my silence should be construed into a tacit admission of the grounds and conclusions set forth in your communication, I deem it a duty which I owe to myself, to submit a few remarks in reply. I shall be pardoned for speaking plainly.

In the first place, the published letter bears upon its face the most conclusive evidence that it was intended only for private perusal, and not at all for publication. It was published without my knowledge, and contrary to my wishes. Surely I need not say that I am not in the habit of writing for the newspapers. The letter was a familiar one, written to an old military friend, with whom I have for many years interchanged opinions on professional subjects. That he should think proper, under any circumstances, to publish it, could not have been foreseen by me.

In the absence of proof that the publication was made with my authority or knowledge, I may be permitted to say, that the quotation in your letter of the 650th paragraph of the superseded regulations of 1825, in which the terms "mischievous" and "disgraceful" are employed to characterize certain letters or reports, conveys, though not openly, a measure of rebuke, which, to say the least, is rather harsh, and which many may think not warranted by the premises.

Again, I have carefully examined the letter in question, and I do not admit that it is ob-

noxious to the objections urged in your communication. I see nothing in it, which, under the same circumstances, I would not write again. To suppose that it will give the enemy valuable information touching our past or prospective line of operations, is to know very little of the Mexican sources of information, or of their extraordinary sagacity and facilities in keeping constantly apprised of our movements. *As to my particular views in regard to the general policy to be pursued towards Mexico, I perceive, from the public journals, that they are shared by many distinguished statesmen, and also, in part, by a conspicuous officer of the navy, the publication of whose opinions is not, perhaps, obstructed by any regulations of his department.* It is difficult, then, to imagine that the diffusion of mine can render any peculiar aid to the enemy or specially to disincline him "to enter into negotiations for peace."

In conclusion, I would say, that it has given me great pain to be brought into the position in which I now find myself with regard to the Department of War and the government. It has not been of my own seeking. To the extent of my ability and the means placed at my disposal, I have sought faithfully to serve the country by carrying out the wishes and instructions of the Executive. But it cannot be concealed that, since the capitulation of Monterey, the confidence of the department, and I too much fear, of the President, has been withdrawn, and my consideration and usefulness correspondingly diminished. The apparent determination of the department to place me in an attitude antagonistical to the government, has an apt illustration in the well known fable of *Æsop*. But I ask no favor, and I shrink from no responsibility. While entrusted with the command in this quarter, I shall continue to devote all my energies to the public good, looking for my reward to the consciousness of pure motives, and to the final verdict of impartial history.

I am, Sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Major General U. S. A., Commanding.

Hon. W. L. MARCY,

Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.

But if any proof were yet wanting of the courage, resource and determination of the brave old chief, it is to be found upon the field of Buena Vista. Despoiled as he had been by the Government, of the most efficient portion of his army, to swell the train of Gen. Scott, in the new campaign which had been projected upon Vera Cruz and the City of Mexico, he was left to his own resources, and the chance of war. Under serious disadvantages, and with a force greatly disproportioned to that of the enemy, he engaged and defeated the Mexican army, in one of the most hotly contested and summary battles to be found anywhere in modern history. The victory of Buena Vista closed the brilliant career of Gen. Taylor in Mexico. From this time the attention of the administration (and to some extent of the people of the country) was attracted towards Gen. Scott and the devious path that lay before him to the Halls of Montezuma. But as far as any acquisition of territory or indemnity obtained, was concerned, the war was virtually closed.

As a result of the war, and the treaty since ratified with the Mexican government, California and New Mexico have become the property of the United States: we have acquired a territory of more than 500,000 square miles, and a population of nearly an hundred thousand, independently of Texas, whose territory covers an area of upward of 300,000 square miles, and is capable of making nearly fifty states of the size of Massachusetts.

What is to be the fate of this immense country? Is it to become a part of this great Union of States to add to its moral and physical wealth by the contributions of an intelligent, industrious, and free population? Shall the great principle of human freedom, the precept of religion and humanity, prevail in the National Legislature, and the law be written in imperishable characters, that no slave shall tread upon its soil? If this could be assured to us, and to the world, a destiny might be marked out for this, as yet, almost uninhabited and undeveloped country, that would thrill with joy the heart of every friend of the human race. That the country on the western slope of the Rocky mountains, embracing Oregon and California, and extending across many parallels of latitude, with hundreds of miles of coast upon the Pacific ocean, indented with good harbors, fertilized by great rivers,—the Columbia and Willamette in Oregon, and the

Sacramento and Colorado in California; with a temperate climate, and a soil in many parts of great agricultural resources, and lying as it does, separated from the centre of the American Union, by a formidable barrier of mountains, and by great lakes and deserts; that such a country should retain its political attachment to us, for any length of time, is extremely doubtful. It will unquestionably become a magnificent transalpine American Republic; and, while there is no ground for the apprehension, that the institution of slavery will ever be established within its limits, (that question having been settled with regard to Oregon by Congress,) the whole territory being admirably adapted to the uses of a free population, there is no reason why the laurel which was snatched from the brow of the immortal discoverer of this Western Continent should not, in the course of time, be replaced by this new State in the adoption of the appropriate and most honorable title of Columbia. Opening as it does upon the islands of the Pacific, and upon the ports of the Eastern nations, with unsurpassed commercial advantages, it is inevitable that the surplus population of the Atlantic States, and the increasing tides of foreign emigration, should flow into it, and make it a great nation.

Far otherwise may be the destiny of the territory acquired in the South. We mean that lying between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, and New Mexico. If the spirit of the South remains what it is now; if there shall be no modification of its opinions and its action, in regard to the institution of slavery, and its perpetuation not only in the States where it has already been incorporated, but in the territories which the fortune of war has placed in our possession; if the influence of the free States in the Congress of the Union shall not be sufficient to enforce the compromises of the Constitution, and to restrict the further extension of slavery in such territories and States as may hereafter come into our actual possession, and under the laws of the United States;—then the effect of these accessions must be of a character destructive to the Constitution, to republican liberty, and to humanity; a new population, foreign to the people of this country, in its language, in its principles of social and political order, in its general civilization, will be brought into the enjoyment of rights and immunities for which they can have no just appreciation.

The power of the South, strengthened by these accessions, (as in the case of Texas, which by its incorporation into the Union, not only brought in with it a slave constitution, but a representation to defend and extend this power by their influence and votes) must ultimately become so preponderating, in the national councils, that the endeavors of all wise and good men, to vindicate the great principle of universal liberty, will be frustrated and for ever. These are some of the questions engendered by the Mexican War, and upon which the issues of the present political canvass are in a great measure based. The opinions of Gen. Taylor upon the question of extension of slavery in the new Territories, are perfectly well known, and accordant with those entertained by the Whigs of the North and South, in regard to the incorporation of new territory into the Union.

The power of the Congress of the United States to admit new States under the Constitution, has always been questioned; but the right and the propriety of its admitting any Territory or State, without the slave restriction, have always been resolutely opposed by all the free States. It was opposed in 1810 and '11 during the debate upon the admission of Orleans as a Territory. It was opposed in 1820, in the debate upon the admission of Missouri. It was opposed, with what zeal we all know, in the discussions upon the admission of Texas. By the act of Congress of 1804, which erected the Territory of Orleans, the introduction into it of slaves from abroad was not only interdicted, but the law expressly forbade the introduction of any slaves from the old States, which had been imported after May 1798; and also of any slaves directly or indirectly, except by a citizen of the United States removing into the ter-

ritory for settlement, and being at the time of his removal a bona fide owner of such slave, or slaves; otherwise the slave to be restored to his freedom. In regard to the constitutionality of admitting new States at all, not formed of the territory originally belonging to the old States, we have the authority of Mr. Jefferson. He says,

"When I consider that the limits of the United States are precisely fixed by the Treaty of 1783, and that the Constitution expressly declares itself to be made for the United States, I cannot help believing the intention was not to permit Congress to admit into the Union, new States, which should be formed out of the territory for which, and under whose authority alone, they were then acting. I do not believe it was meant that they might receive England, Ireland, Holland," &c.

Before the close of the war, and during the pendency of these exciting questions with reference to the acquisition of new territories, and the rights of the South in these acquisitions, Gen. Taylor began to receive nominations for the Presidency. Dazzled by his brilliant successes in Mexico, the fruits of a high order of military talent, his correspondence with the Government, which alone would have rendered any civilian conspicuous, and entertaining a profound respect for his character for honesty, moderation and humanity, persons and parties, of widely different opinions in all parts of the country, solicited his acceptance of their nominations for the Presidency. Gen. Taylor being but little acquainted with the organization of parties, and observing that these nominations were confined to neither of the great political parties, exclusively, conceived it possible, and desired if his name were to be used in connection with the Presidency at all, that his nomination should come directly from the people without the aid of party conventions. With this view, he used the following language in his letter to Peter Sken Smith:

I do not desire the Presidency, and only yield thus far my assent, to be considered a candidate in the same proportion in which it is desired by the people, irrespective of party.

This was a position entirely consistent with the independent character of Gen. Taylor. It is, however, to be understood, that the General had always been known as a Whig, and that long before his letter to Mr. Smith, he had so declared himself in his letter to Mr. W. E. Russell, which follows.

HEAD-QUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION: }
Matamoras, July 21, 1846. }

DEAR SIR:—By yesterday's mail I received your letter of the 17th June, and have given the subject to which you refer, much serious reflection and consideration. I feel very grateful to you, Sir, and to my fellow-citizens who with you have expressed the very flattering desire to place my name in nomination for the Presidency, but it becomes me sincerely and frankly to acknowledge to you that for that office I have no aspirations whatever. Although no politician, having held myself aloof from the clamors of party politics, I AM A WHIG, and shall ever be devoted in individual opinion to the principles of that party.

Even if the subject which you have in your letter opened to me were acceptable at any time to me, I have not the leisure to attend to it now; the vigorous prosecution of the war with Mexico, so important to the interests of the country, demands every moment of my present time, and that is my great object to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination.

With my best wishes for your health and prosperity, I am, most sincerely yours,
WM. E. RUSSELL, Esq. Z. TAYLOR, Maj. Gen. U. S. A.

That Gen. Taylor's opinions with reference to a popular nomination, became essentially modified in the course of his subsequent correspondence, is everywhere apparent.

All his personal and political affinities were with the Whig party; and finding that his idea of the fusion of the two great parties and their reorganization upon a basis like that of Gen. Washington's administration, could not be realized, he readily and properly yielded himself to the wishes of his Whig friends, and thus became the nominee of the National Convention at Philadelphia. Before how

ever, receiving that nomination, he had declared his opinions frankly, in his letter to Capt. Alison, which we append.

BATON ROUGE, April 22, 1848.

Dear Sir—My opinions have recently been so often misconceived and misrepresented, that I deem it due to myself, if not to my friends, to make a brief exposition of them upon the topics to which you have called my attention.

I have consented to the use of my name as a candidate for the Presidency. I have frankly avowed my own distrust of my fitness for that high station; but having, at the solicitation of many of my countrymen, taken my position as a candidate, I do not feel at liberty to surrender that position until my friends manifest a wish that I should retire from it. I will then most gladly do so. I have no private purposes to accomplish, no party purposes to build up, no enemies to punish—nothing to serve but my country.

I have been very often addressed by letter, and my opinions have been asked upon almost every question that might occur to the writers as affecting the interests of their country or their party. I have not always responded to these inquiries, for various reasons.

I confess, whilst I have great cardinal principles which will regulate my political life, I am not sufficiently familiar with all the minute details of political legislation, to give solemn pledges to exert my influence, if I were President, to carry out this or defeat that measure. I have no concealment. I hold no opinion which I would not readily proclaim to my assembled countrymen; but crude impressions upon matters of policy, which may be right to-day and wrong to-morrow, are, perhaps, not the best test of fitness for office. One who cannot be trusted without pledges, cannot be confided in merely on account of them. I will proceed, however, now to respond to your inquiries.

First—I reiterate what I have often said—I am a Whig, but not an ultra Whig. If elected I would not be the mere President of a party. I would endeavor to act independent of party domination. I should feel bound to administer the Government untrammelled by party schemes.

Second—The veto power.—The power given by the constitution to the Executive to interpose his veto, is a high conservative power; but in my opinion should never be exercised except in cases of clear violation of the constitution, or manifest haste and want of consideration by Congress. Indeed, I have thought that for many years past, the known opinions and wishes of the Executive have exercised undue and injurious influence upon the legislative department of the government; and for this cause I have thought our system was in danger of undergoing a great change from its true theory. The personal opinions of the individual who may happen to occupy the Executive chair, ought not to control the action of Congress upon questions of domestic policy; nor ought his objection to be interposed where questions of constitutional power have been settled by the various departments of government and acquiesced in by the people.

Third—Upon the subject of the tariff, the currency, the improvement of our great highways, rivers, lakes, and harbors, the will of the people, as expressed through their representatives in Congress, ought to be respected and carried out by the Executive.

Fourth—The Mexican War. I sincerely rejoice at the prospect of peace. My life has been devoted to arms, yet I look upon war at all times and under all circumstances as a national calamity, to be avoided if compatible with national honor. The principles of our government as well as its true policy are opposed to the subjugation of other nations, and the dismemberment of other countries by conquest. In the language of the great Washington, "Why should we quit our own to stand on foreign ground?" In the Mexican War our national honor has been vindicated, amply vindicated, and in dictating terms of peace we may well afford to be forbearing and even magnanimous to our fallen foe.

These are my opinions upon the subjects referred to by you; and any reports or publications, written or verbal, from any source, differing in any essential particular from what is here written, are unauthorized and untrue.

I do not know that I shall again write upon the subject of national politics. I shall engage in no schemes, no combinations, no intrigues. If the American people have not confidence in me they ought not to give me their suffrages. If they do not, you know me well enough to believe me when I declare I shall be content. I am too old a soldier to murmur against such high authority.

Z. TAYLOR.

To Capt. J. S. Alison.

In this letter he declares himself to be a "Whig, but not an ultra Whig;" that he is in favor of a restriction of the Veto power. Upon the Mexican War and all wars, that he regards them under all circumstances as national calamities. Upon the subject of the Tariff, Currency, Highways, and the improvement of Rivers and Harbors, that the will of the people should be the law; and upon the principle of the ordinance of 1787, or the Wilmot Proviso, he has said,

"that it is an object (its application to the new territories) too high and permanent to be baffled by Presidential Vetoes." These are Whig sentiments, and nothing else; they are the distinctive principles of the Whig party; and whether affirmed by Mr. Webster, or Gen. Taylor, are nevertheless the property of the Whigs of the Union. If any doubt exists in the mind of any conscientious Whig, that doubt is removed by his second letter to Capt. Alison, which we here subjoin, — The letter is a connected narrative of the series of circumstances which resulted in his becoming a candidate. It presents, in a compact form, all the matters bearing upon the subject, and exhibits Gen. Taylor in his proper character — true to himself, to his friends, and to his country.

EAST PASCAGOULA, Sept. 4, 1848.

DEAR SIR:—On the 22d day of May last, I addressed you a letter, explaining my views in regard to various matters of public policy, lest my fellow citizens might be misled by the many contradictory and conflicting statements in respect to them which appeared in the journals of the day, and were circulated throughout the country. I now find myself misrepresented and misunderstood upon another point, of such importance to myself personally, if not to the country at large, as to claim from me a candid and connected exposition of my relations to the public in regard to the pending Presidential canvass.

The utmost ingenuity has been expended upon several letters and detached sentences of letters, which have recently appeared over my signature, to show that I occupy an equivocal attitude towards the various parties into which the people are divided, and especially toward the Whig party, as represented by the National Convention, which assembled in Philadelphia, in June last. Had these letters and scraps of letters been published or construed in connection with what I have heretofore said upon this subject, I should not now have to complain of the speed with which my answers to isolated questions have been given up to the captious criticism of those who have been made my enemies by a nomination which has been tendered to me without solicitation or arrangement of mine; or of the manner in which selected passages in some of my letters, written in the freedom and carelessness of a confidential correspondence, have been communicated to the public press. But riven from the context, and separated from a series of explanatory facts and circumstances which are, in so far as this canvass is concerned, historical, they are as deceptive as though they were positive fabrications. I address you this letter to correct the injustice that has been done me, and the public, to the extent that I am an object of interest to them, by this illiberal process.

I shall not weary you by an elaborate recital of every incident connected with the first presentation of my name as a candidate for the Presidency. I was then at the head of the American army in the valley of the Rio Grande. I was surrounded by Whigs and Democrats, who had stood by me in the trying hours of my life, and whom it was my destiny to conduct through scenes of still greater trial. My duty to that army, and to the Republic whose battles we were waging, forbade my assuming a position of seeming hostility to any portion of the brave men under my command, all of whom knew I was a Whig in principle, for I made no concealment of my political sentiments or predilections.

Such had been the violence of party struggles during our late Presidential elections, that the acceptance of a nomination, under the various interpretations given to the obligations of a candidate, presented to the public with a formula of political principles, was equivalent almost to a declaration of uncompromising enmity to all who did not subscribe to its tenets. I was unwilling to hazard the effect of such relationship toward any of the soldiers under my command, when in front of an enemy common to us all. It would have been unjust in itself, and it was as repugnant to my own feelings as it was to my duty. I wanted unity in the army, and forebore any act that might sow the seeds of distrust and discord in its ranks. I have not my letters written at the time before me, but they are all of one import, and in conformity with the views herein expressed.

Meanwhile I was solicited by my personal friends and by strangers, by Whigs and Democrats, to consent to become a candidate. I was nominated by the people in primary assemblies—by Whigs, Democrats, and Natives, in separate and mixed meetings. I resisted them all, and continued to do so till led to believe that my opposition was assuming the aspect of a defiance of the popular wishes. I yielded only when it looked like presumption to resist longer; and even then I should not have done so, had not the nomination been presented to me in a form unlikely to awaken acrimony or reproduce the bitterness of feeling which attends popular elections. I say it in sincerity and truth, that a part of the inducement to my consent was the hope that by going into the canvass it would be conducted with candor if not with kindness. It has been no fault of mine that this anticipation has proved a vain one.

After I permitted myself to be announced for the Presidency, under the circumstances above noticed, I accepted nomination after nomination, in the spirit in which they were

tended. They were made irrespective of parties, and so acknowledged. No one who joined in those nominations could have been deceived as to my political views. From the beginning till now I have declared myself to be a Whig on all proper occasions. With this distinct avowal published to the world, I did not think that I had a right to repel nominations from political opponents, any more than I had a right to refuse the vote of a Democrat at the polls; and I proclaimed it abroad that I should not reject the proffered support of any body of my fellow citizens. This was my position when, in November last, I returned to the United States; long before either of the great divisions of the people had held a National Convention, and when it was thought doubtful if one of them would hold any.

Matters stood in this attitude till Spring, when there were so many statements in circulation, concerning my views upon questions of national policy, that I felt constrained to correct the errors into which the public mind was falling, by a more explicit enunciation of principles, which I did to you in my letter in April last. That letter, and the facts which I have detailed as briefly as a proper understanding of them would permit, developed my whole position in relation to the Presidency at the time.

The Democratic Convention met in May, and composed their ticket to suit them. This they had a right to do. The National Whig Convention met in June, and selected me as their candidate. I accepted the nomination with gratitude and with pride. I was proud of the confidence of such a body of men, representing such a constituency as the Whig party of the United States, a manifestation the more grateful because it was not cumbered with exactions incompatible with the dignity of the Presidential office, and the responsibilities of its incumbent to the whole people of the nation. And I may add that these emotions were increased by associating my name with that of the distinguished citizen of New York, whose acknowledged abilities and sound conservative opinions might have justly entitled him to the first place on the ticket.

The Convention adopted me as it found me — a Whig — decided but not ultra in my opinions; and I should be without excuse, if I were to shift the relationships which subsisted at the time. They took me with the declaration of principles I had published to the world, and I should be without defence, if I were to say, or do any thing to impair the force of that declaration.

I have said that I would accept a nomination from Democrats; but in so doing I would not abate one jot or tittle of my opinions as written down. Such a nomination, as indicating a coincidence of opinion on the part of those making it, should not be regarded with disfavor by those who think with me; as a compliment personal to myself, it should not be expected that I would repulse them with insult. I shall not modify my views to entice them to my side; I shall not reject their aid when they join my friends voluntarily.

I have said I was not a party candidate, nor am I, in that straitened and sectarian sense which would prevent my being the President of the whole people in case of my election. I did not regard myself as one before the Convention met, and that body did not seek to make me different from what I was: they did not fetter me down to a series of pledges which were to be an iron rule of action, in all, and in despite of all, the contingencies that might arise in the course of a Presidential term. I am not engaged to lay violent hands indiscriminately upon public officers, good or bad, who may differ in opinion with me. I am not expected to force Congress, by the coercion of the veto, to pass laws to suit me, or pass none. This is what I mean by not being a party candidate. And I understand this is good Whig doctrine. I would not be a *partisan* President, and hence should not be a party candidate, in the sense that would make one. This is the sum and substance of my meaning, and this is the purport of the facts and circumstances attending my nomination, when considered in their connection with, and dependence upon one another.

I refer all persons who are anxious on the subject, to this statement, for the proper understanding of my position toward the Presidency and the people. If it is not intelligible, I cannot make it so, and shall cease to attempt it.

In taking leave of the subject, I have only to add, that my two letters to you embrace all the topics I design to speak of pending this canvass. If I am elected, I shall do all that an honest zeal may effect to cement the bonds of our Union, and establish the happiness of my countrymen upon an enduring basis.

Z. TAYLOR.

To Capt. J. S. ALISON.

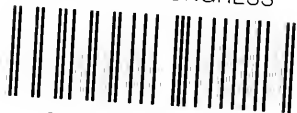
We have thus in a hasty and imperfect manner gone over the principal events in the life of Gen. Taylor, and particularly of that part embraced within the period of the Mexican war. We have examined his position with reference to the war, and the designs of the administration, quoting liberally from his published letters and despatches. We believe we have made it clear, from the evidence

embodied in these pages, that the administration in Congress, conceived and prosecuted a design to destroy the just reputation which Gen. Taylor had acquired in the war, from two circumstances; first, because he was a Whig, and opposed to the war and conquest policy of the Government, and second, because that fact, joined with the laurels which he had won in Mexico, were likely to become the means of prostrating its own power. That these apprehensions were well justified, subsequent events have conclusively shown. No lover of his country, and no sincere friend of peace who reads the correspondence of Gen. Taylor with the War Department, can fail to yield to him the high characteristics of wisdom, prudence, and humanity. During the whole period of his military service, while he has held the sword, he has been emphatically a man of peace. In the midst of conflicts imposed upon him by duty and necessity, he feels that "peace hath her victories more glorious than war."

For many months he held his position at Corpus Christi, patiently hoping and expecting, that peaceful counsels, and negotiations would avert the horrors of war, and result in the establishment of peace. Driven at last to assume an offensive attitude towards the Mexican nation by the imperative orders of Government, his battles became monuments of firmness and courage, and his victories of moderation and humanity. That he is an old fashioned conservative Whig, all his former associations and his published letters testify. That he will be elected President of the United States, no reasonable man can doubt. When placed in the Executive Chair, we have the strongest guaranties that he will form an administration which will preserve peace and amity with all nations, promote the industry and happiness of the people, and accomplish the true glory of the Republic.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely Urdu or Persian, running vertically along the right edge of the page. The text is partially obscured by the binding of the book.

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